

The Cultural Collaborative:

A Community Plan for San Antonio's Creative Economy

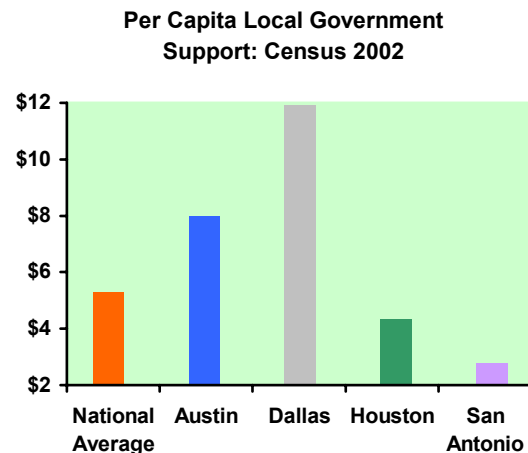
The Cultural Collaborative, or TCC for short, establishes a community partnership to enhance San Antonio's cultural resources and position our city for greater economic investment. By joining forces in this cooperative effort, the public, private, and cultural sectors of our community can work together to develop a plan to create a thriving creative industry in San Antonio.

San Antonio has the ability to institute and sustain TCC through our existing cultural infrastructure. Our vibrant arts community, multicultural heritage, strong historic preservation efforts, and unique festivals make our city a stimulating cultural ecosystem. Known as the city of festivals, we annually celebrate art (Contemporary Art Month), culture (Día de los Muertos, Texas Folklife Festival), music (International Accordion and Conjunto Festivals), film (CineFestival, Snakebite Film Festival, San Antonio Underground Film Festival) and photography (FotoSeptiembre). However, San Antonio has reached a crucial moment. Our community needs a viable plan for the future development of our cultural sector. By treating arts and culture as economic assets, this sector will promote economic development, therefore improving the quality of life for all residents.

Many aspects of San Antonio's cultural sector are rapidly expanding; however, during this time of economic insecurity and declining financial assistance for the arts, growth has many consequences. San Antonio has reached a crucial point: the cultural sector is developing, yet organizations are weakened by lack of support. Some organizations are beginning to close their doors indefinitely, art education in schools is declining, and private support funds are rapidly depleting. This situation leaves San Antonio's civic and community leaders compelled to investigate new ways to sustain our cultural assets, such as implementing an united arts fund.

Some of the local challenges are obvious, others are not:

- **Exhausted funding sources**
- **Inadequate mix of facilities and resources**
- **Undercapitalized nonprofit organizations**
- **Lack of communication among the cultural sector**
- **Lack of awareness about activities in the cultural sector**
- **Lack of awareness about the importance of the arts to education, revitalization, economic development, and cultural tourism**



Source: Americans for the Arts, 2003.

TCC is San Antonio's roadmap to sustaining the cultural sector. TCC will research, analyze, formulate solutions, and implement those solutions. TCC will review and revise cultural policies and define ways to impact our local economy through urban revitalization, arts education, tourism, and attracting and retaining businesses.

TCC will lead the public, private, and cultural sectors in:

- **Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the cultural sector**
- **Sharing the responsibilities of implementation to create a sustainable cultural industry**
- **Empowering San Antonians to express themselves and define the future of their community**
- **Identifying community values, including a vision for cultural resources and participation**

The Cultural Collaborative and Economic Development

“Artists and creative businesses, when concentrated, can create a “cool” place to work, live, or visit. Arts and cultural activities contribute to the overall quality of life, which attracts and retains companies and their employees....Places that succeed in attracting and retaining creative class people prosper; those that fail don’t.”

--Dr. Richard Florida, author of *The Rise of the Creative Class*

Cultural planning contributes to community development by:

- Attracting, Retaining, and Growing Businesses and Creative Individuals
- Revitalizing the Urban Fabric
- Fostering a Creative Workforce through Arts Education
- Giving a Competitive Advantage to Cultural Tourism

Attracting, Retaining, and Growing Businesses and Creative Individuals: Culture and economic development are closely aligned. A thriving cultural community generates income, jobs, tax revenue, and visibility. Art and culture are an economic asset and a critical component in marketing San Antonio. Because creative communities attract, retain, and foster creative people, businesses, and industries, San Antonio's robust cultural environment can be a selling point for the economic development efforts lead by the Southside Initiative, San Antonio International Airport, Kelly USA, Brooks City Base, and the Medical Center. Cultural environments provide outside observers with insight into the life of our community, and businesses tend to gravitate to creative communities infused with cultural activities.

To develop and maintain an economically successful creative environment, San Antonio's cultural community must capitalize on our existent cultural industries. For instance, though San Antonio has an active film community, including leading production companies (NewTek, Match Frame), numerous film festivals, and a Film Commission, San Antonio is not recognized as a motion picture city. By cultivating this area of the arts, San Antonio can encourage the expansion of this industry, thus creating more professional jobs, and emerging as a premier destination for the motion picture industry.

Likewise, talented people, a community's most important resource, must be cultivated and retained. Increasingly, people have become sophisticated “consumers of place.” Many businesses have been forced to locate to communities where talented and creative people prefer to live. In today's labor market, a business must be where their employees want to be. Moreover, cultural participation helps develop the creative skills required by the workforce and opens the door to civic and social ingenuity. Communities that attract talent offer physical areas that foster the interaction of diverse talents and viewpoints, which in turn strengthen community identity, facilitate innovation, and catalyze economic development.

Revitalizing the Urban Fabric: By attracting and sustaining a creative environment, art and culture are a critical component for urban revitalization. San Antonio has witnessed this phenomenon with the development of Blue Star Arts Space as an economic anchor for the community of Southtown. Prior to its development, Southtown was an area in need of revitalization. Today, Southtown is booming with new restaurants, salons, offices, galleries, and a variety of “creative” businesses in desired “mixed-use” settings. These businesses are consistently supplied with consumers through such events as First Friday and Contemporary Art Month. With Southtown as an example, other urban clusters, such as the Deco District, downtown Houston Street, Broadway, and Blanco Road, are showing interest in using art and cultural activities as a means of revitalization. However, the lack of shared resources, funding, and planning are major challenges preventing these neighborhoods from attaining this goal.

As with Southtown, a vibrant arts and cultural environment can define the uniqueness of place. Preservation and public art projects help maintain the history as well as enhance and promote the identity of San Antonio and its neighborhoods. Our expansive parks, historical buildings, and landmarks are a

source of civic pride and foster a sense of identity and cohesion. Alongside historic structures, art and good design beautifies, modernizes, and inspires. However, San Antonio is still lagging behind other cities in engaging artists and cultural programming for enhancement and revitalization. Despite our pride in existing civic aesthetics, art and culture remain an afterthought in San Antonio.

“Toyota is looking for good team players, people with above-average intelligence, good verbal and communication skills, demonstrating flexibility, adaptability, [and] problem-solving ability.”

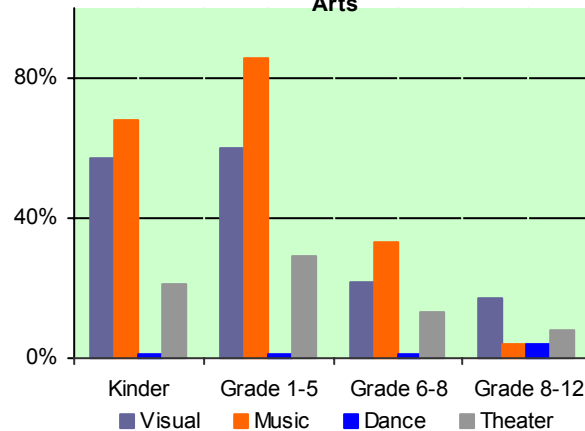
Fostering a Creative Workforce through Arts Education:

Businesses are looking for an imaginative and innovative workforce. Today, almost every job requires some form of creativity. Toyota, like many other companies, recognizes that workers educated in the arts are innovators, who grasp and clearly communicate alternative solutions. Exposure to the arts fosters original perspectives and the ability to use creativity to perform more efficiently. Fundamental to a community's creativity is the education its students receive both in the community and through school. As businesses increasingly begin to hire creative employees, arts instruction should be a top priority in our schools. In the past 20 years, schools have

created partnerships with visual and performing arts organizations to facilitate arts instruction.

San Antonio's cultural organizations reached over 150,000, kindergarten through 12th grade students in the 1999-2000 school year. Services were offered for free or minimal cost to all public school districts and 136 private schools. *The Arts Dynamic*, a recently completed survey and analysis of arts education in San Antonio's schools (San Antonio Arts in Education Task Force, 2000), proves that incorporating the arts into school curriculum significantly increases comprehension and test performances in all academic areas. The survey also found that San Antonio's students are not receiving adequate exposure to arts curricula.

San Antonio's Student Enrollment in the Arts



Source: *The Arts Dynamic*, 2000.

Giving a Competitive Advantage to Cultural Tourism: Tourism is the third largest industry in San Antonio. Throughout the nation, cities are utilizing their arts festivals and cultural events as the backbone of most marketing and promotional packages. Many cities have already embraced and enhanced their arts communities as viable resources that generate cultural tourism and have an economic impact. San Antonio, known as the city of festivals, recognizes it's unique culture through a number of varied celebrations, such as Contemporary Art Month, Dia de los Muertos, CineFestival, and FotoSeptiembre, to name a few. Moreover, San Antonio's historic preservation efforts have retained the personality of our diverse neighborhoods and historic landmarks. By laying out a plan to cultivate and market our existent infrastructure and cultural offerings, San Antonio can easily encourage tourism.

Cultural travel is a tremendous growth opportunity within the highly competitive tourism market, and San Antonio is uniquely poised to capitalize on this market through its vibrant cultural sector, unique cultural events that occur throughout the year. Cultural tourists travel more frequently and stay longer at their destinations than the average tourist. They tend to stay in hotels and motels, spend more money, and are likely to return for cultural programming that varies annually. Cultural tourism is an essential component of economic health for San Antonio's visitor industry and for the cultural sector, since city-funded cultural organizations depend on operational funds received from the Hotel/Motel Tax dollars generated by tourists.

TCC Schedule of Activities

Preliminary Cultural Planning Study

December 2002

- 75 participants representing all facets of the community
- 19 meetings discussing a variety of topics affecting the arts and cultural community
- Full text of the results of the study can be read at OCA's website: <http://www.sanantonio.gov/art/>

TCC Steering Committee

September 2003

- Committee is composed of 30-50 civic and community leaders appointed by the Mayor
- Member selection based on their interest in cultural affairs, leadership in their field of expertise, and their ability to represent the community
- Establish Executive Committee
- Sets priorities for planning process & monitors progress
- Endorses final plan

Conference on Art, Culture, and the Creative Economy

November 12

- One-day conference focusing on issues affecting San Antonio's cultural sector
- Keynote speaker, Richard Florida, Professor of Regional Economic Development at Carnegie Mellon University and author of *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How Its Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life*

Research and Community Input

January 2004 -

- Research, inventories, needs assessments, audience surveys, and economic, financial and comparative data gathering
- Public forums, workshops, and meetings in all districts. Participants include:
 - Artists, arts patrons, cultural organizations
 - Business & corporate leaders
 - Educators
 - Philanthropists
 - Neighborhood and community leaders

Performance

Implementation Program

- Strategic solutions for the enhancement and future of San Antonio's cultural sector
- A set of specific goals and objectives for the public, private, and cultural sectors to accomplish
- Short and long-term implementation projects

